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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 8, 2004

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 8, 2004. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

ZAMAN/TURKIYE: Five children that had been (allegedly) kidnapped in Diyarbakir and forced to commit crimes such as pickpocketing and robbery, were rescued during a police operation yesterday at Haydarpasa Train Station in Istanbul. The police detained one person accused of bringing the children from Diyarbakir to Istanbul to join an intercity crime network. (Note: Turkiye newspaper reports the number of children kidnapped as 6. End note.)

CUMHURIYET/YENI SAFAK: Ibrahim Parlak, who had been sentenced on charges of shooting two Turkish soldiers at the Turkish-Syrian border (note: in a 1988 incident) and who is (allegedly) tied to the terrorist organization PKK, now faces deportation from the U.S. He was found to have provided false answers on his U.S. green card application.

YENI SAFAK: Prof. Ibrahim Kaboglu, head of the Advisory Board of Human Rights, called upon Alevi to put pressure on the state authorities regarding the building of mosques in Alevi villages. Kaboglu (reportedly) said, "If mosques are being built in Alevi towns, you should press for your rights and try to exert influence even by taking the matter to European Court of Human Rights." Kaboglu further stated (reportedly) that Alevi are scarcely mentioned in the EU Progress Report, however since the Kurds are the 'weak spot' of the EU, the EU always attaches priority to Kurdish issues and undermines people of other ethnic origins in Anatolia.

RADIKAL/CUMHURIYET/YENI SAFAK/SABAH: At the request of the Department of Justice, the Board of Ministers of the Netherlands government decided to add PKK to its official list of terrorist organizations. The Dutch Cabinet agreed to outlaw and seize the assets of all terrorist organizations listed by the European Union. The banned organizations will not be allowed to operate under different names.

RADIKAL/CUMHURIYET/OZGUR GUNDEM/SABAH : Upon the demand of the Prosecutor Pinar Akkoc Haktanir, the Kiziltepe Court of Peace decided to classify the investigation into the deaths of Ahmet and Ugur Kaymaz as secret, in order to maintain a "fair and objective judicial proceeding and investigation." Pursuant to the decision, the request of the lawyer for the Kaymaz family, Huseyin Cangir, to examine the case file was also rejected. Huseyin Cangir stated his wish that every phase of the judicial process be open to public. According to Sabah newspaper, contrary to the claims of security forces, the MPs of the Justice and Welfare Party stated that "there were no evidence of clashes." Sabah reported that MPs said the people of the region were pleased with the Prime Minister's comment that "a 12-year-old child cannot be called a terrorist."

OZGUR GUNDEM: Tunceli Bar Association attorneys held a demonstration to protest violations of law in the region. Bulent Tas, head of the Tunceli Bar Association, said, "especially in Tunceli, the recent resuming of methods used in 1994 worries us greatly." Many members of NGOs supported the demonstration as well.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Hakkari FM is on the air again. The one-month penalty imposed by the Turkish Higher Board of Radio and Television temporarily banning the broadcast of Hakkari FM has expired. The ban was imposed upon the grounds that "the broadcast of the radio was promoting separatism."

CUMHURIYET: Prof. Ahmet Ercan, the Head of the Geophysics Board in Turkey, said fuel leaking from the fuel storage facilities into the soil is poisoning the people in Batman. Ercan carried out research in Batman, where (allegedly) an underground methane gas accumulation led to a blast on May 3 which killed 3 people and wounded 25. He said that in the course of 35 years, 64,000 tons of fuel leaked from the fuel storage facilities as well as from TUPRAS (Turkish Petroleum Refineries Corporation), causing diseases related to increased levels of water, air and soil contamination.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Van's Jandarma Command detected one Syrian, seven Lebanese, and 19 Afghan nationals as they were trying to cross the border illegally from Gulderen and Uzunyol townships

in Van.

SABAH: In the 1990s, the population of Diyarbakir (reportedly) increased from 300,000 to 1,000,000. Thousands of children that have nothing else in which to engage are drawn to committing crimes. Sometimes these children are kidnapped and placed into crime networks; this situation therefore affects other cities as well. The families of some of the children recently kidnapped in Diyarbakir and forced to commit crimes were (allegedly) paid money in exchange for "allowing" their children to be taken to Istanbul. Regarding the problem of children committing crimes in cities, Efkan Ala, the Governor of Diyarbakir, says it's because of deprivation and poverty, and welcomed every effort and suggestion about how to deal with the issue. Ala stated, "Diyarbakir's problem is not solely the problem of Southeast Turkey. This problem should be of interest to everybody in the country."

REID